

friend from Oklahoma, I cannot certify that Members of the Senate will understand what they are reading. That presumes a certain level of perception on my part in understanding and delving into the minds of Senators that not only have they read but they have taken the time to understand. And what does "understand" mean? Understand the second and third levels, the fourth level of questions? I think it is a practical impossibility for anybody to certify that any other Senator has fully understood. They may read, but they may not fully understand for a whole variety of reasons. So I cannot certify that.

Mr. COBURN. Could I clarify my request?

Mr. BAUCUS. I have to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. COBURN. Let me clarify my request that the individual certify themselves. I am not asking some group of Senators to certify some other Senator. I am saying that Tom Coburn tells his constituency: I have read this puppy. I have spent the time on it. I have read the managers' amendment, and I, in fact, certify to the people of Oklahoma that I know how terrible it is going to be for their health care.

Mr. BAUCUS. The Senator is always free to make any representations he wants. If he wants to certify he has read it and certify that he has understood it, that is the Senator's privilege.

Mr. COBURN. But the Senator won't accept that we as a body, on one-sixth of the economy, ought to say we know what we are doing?

Mr. BAUCUS. I can't certify that every Member of the Senate has done anything around here. Neither can the Senator from Oklahoma. That is an impossibility. But if the Senator wants to certify he has read it, that is great, and understands it fully, that is great, on any measure—not just this measure but any measure. But I can't certify that for 100 different Senators, on any measure. That is up to the individual Senators and that is up to their mental capacities and up to their initiatives and imaginations and conscientiousness and so forth. I can't certify to that.

Mr. COBURN. I thank the chairman.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Vermont be recognized to proceed for at least a half hour.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 2837 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2786

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I call up my amendment per the order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). The clerk will report the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Vermont [Mr. SANDERS], for himself, Mr. BURRIS, and Mr. BROWN, proposes an amendment numbered 2837 to amendment No. 2786.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the read-

ing of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The assistant legislative clerk continued with the reading of the amendment.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be considered as read.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. COBURN. There is objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, may I ask my friend from Oklahoma why he is objecting?

Mr. COBURN. Regular order, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Regular order is the reading of the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk continued with the reading of the amendment.

(The amendment (No. 2837) is printed in the RECORD of Wednesday, December 2, 2009, under "Text of Amendments.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CARDIN). The Senator from Vermont is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 2837 WITHDRAWN

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I withdraw my amendment.

Mr. COBURN. Regular order, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right. The amendment is withdrawn.

Mr. SANDERS. Pursuant to the 30 minutes that I—

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. SHAHEEN). Under the previous order, the Senator from Vermont is recognized for 30 minutes.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, let me begin not by talking about my amendment but by talking about the Republican action that we have seen right here on the floor of the Senate. Everybody in this country understands that our Nation faces a significant number of major crises—whether it is the disintegration of our health care system, the fact that 17 percent of our people are unemployed or underemployed, or the fact that one out of four of our children is living on food stamps. We have two wars, we have global warming, we have a \$12 trillion national debt, and the best the Republicans can do is try to bring the U.S. Government to a halt by forcing a reading of a 700-page amendment. That is an outrage. People can have honest disagreements, but in this moment of crisis it is wrong to bring the U.S. Government to a halt.

I am very disturbed that I am unable to bring the amendment that I wanted to bring to the floor of the Senate. I thank Senator REID for allowing me to try to bring it up before it was obstructed and delayed and prevented by

the Republican leadership. My amendment, which was cosponsored by Senators SHERROD BROWN and ROLAND BURRIS, would have instituted a Medicare-for-all single-payer program. I was more than aware and very proud that, were it not for the Republican's obstructionist tactics, this would have been the first time in American history that a Medicare-for-all single-payer bill was brought to a vote before the floor of the Senate. I was more than aware that this amendment would not win. I knew that. But I am absolutely convinced that this legislation or legislation like it will eventually become the law of the land.

The reason for my optimism that a Medicare-for-all single-payer bill will eventually prevail is that this type of system is and will be the only mechanism we have to provide comprehensive high-quality health care to all of our people in a cost-effective way. It is the only approach that eliminates the hundreds of billions of dollars in waste, administrative costs, bureaucracy, and profiteering by the private insurance companies, and we are not going to provide comprehensive, universal, cost-effective health care to all of our people without eliminating that waste. That is the simple truth.

The day will come, although I recognize it is not today, when the Congress will have the courage to stand up to the private insurance companies and the drug companies and the medical equipment suppliers and all of those who profit and make billions of dollars every single year off of human sickness. On that day, when it comes—and it will come—the U.S. Congress will finally proclaim that health care is a right of all people and not just a privilege. And that day will come, as surely as I stand here today.

There are those who think that Medicare-for-all is some kind of a fringe idea—that there are just a few leftwing folks out there who think this is the way to go. But let me assure you that this is absolutely not the case. The single-payer concept has widespread support from diverse groups from diverse regions throughout the United States. In fact, in a 2007 AP/Yahoo poll, 65 percent of respondents said that the United States should adopt a universal health insurance program in which everyone is covered under a program like Medicare that is run by the Government and financed by taxpayers.

There is also widespread support for a Medicare-for-all approach among those people who understand this issue the most, and that is the medical community. That support goes well beyond the 17,000 doctors in the Physicians for National Health Care Program, who are fighting every day for a single-payer system. It goes beyond the California Nurses Association, the largest nurses union in the country, who are also fighting for a Medicare-for-all, single-payer health care. In March of 2008,